

Article

# Four Religious Education Teachers: Four Retrospective Career Trajectories

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**Abstract:** This article examines the career paths of Finnish Religious Education (RE) teachers who were born in the 1930s, through a retrospective, self-autobiographical life history approach. The material reported here is a part of wider data of mainly written narratives (N = 62) from RE teachers who recount their career trajectories. In these career-focused life histories, the teachers outline their own professionalism as embedded in changing sociohistorical contexts, where to a great extent they tell about the active development of the school and the teaching of their particular subject to answer to the changing needs and challenges. Some teachers have, along with their teaching, also been actively involved in different communities or associations. Many of the Religious Education teachers here reflect on their career paths in relation to their profession as a teacher and often also with double qualifications as pastor trained theologians. At times, this constructs a possibility for tension between the roles of a teacher and that of a pastor, and in the perceptions of RE as a school subject and as something “preached” in the pulpit—some see their professionalism above all in relation to their religious life. This also includes a notable gender divide in the data, as at the time when these teachers gained their professional qualifications, it was only possible for men to be ordained in the Finnish Lutheran Church. Succeeding this, the male teachers in these data commonly have pastorhood as their first profession. For the purpose of this article, the career accounts of four teachers have been selected for further analysis, as they were perceived as telling examples of the wider material in terms of more or less typical career paths.

**Keywords:** religious education; teacher; career trajectory; life history; narrative

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## 1. Introduction: Religious Education and Confessionality in the Finnish School System

This article presents a retrospective life history approach study on the career trajectories of Finnish Religious Education (RE) teachers who were born in the 1930s. Over the past 20 years, there has been very little research on the history of Religious Education (RE) as a school subject in Finnish comprehensive school education. One of the themes that the previous studies on RE has raised is the strong increase in secularism and secularization in society (Saine 2000; Poulter 2013). Confessionality as a topic of research has also been discussed in earlier research, which reflects societal change and the development of religious education as a school subject (Pyysiäinen 1982; Kähkönen 1976). However, a study of the careers of religious education teachers as told by themselves, dealing for example with the foundation of Finnish comprehensive schools in the late 1960s and early 1970s, has not been done before. A broad debate about the confessionality of religious education took place in the 1970s, when confessionality was given several definitions. It was viewed from legal, theological, pedagogical and social points of view (Kähkönen 1976, pp. 244–45; Tamminen and Vesa 1982, p. 33; Pyysiäinen 1982, pp. 61, 68, 221–22; Luodeslampi 2009).

Over the past 150 years, Finnish school education has served as a tool for achieving the goals of civic education. The history of civic education in religious education creates a trajectory first of all about the citizenship of the “Kingdom of God” and then of the nation state, and ultimately the individual determination of global citizenship. The doctrine of religion has clearly changed from the observance of morality and spirituality bound to the Lutheran doctrine and form of life towards a more pluralistic and individualized search. The key factor of change has also been secularization (Poulter 2013, pp. 103–15). As for this change, the teachers of the study reported here were working at a time when the emphasis on Lutheranism was moving towards pluralism.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, school was a matter of political debate in Finland. At the time, 1972–1978, the comprehensive school (Peruskoulu), obligatory schooling for children aged from 7 to 16, was in the process of superseding the previous school type, the 4–8-year elementary school (Kansakoulu). In the 1960s, all the pupils attended the Kansakoulu for a minimum of four years. After this, for those who took six years in Kansakoulu were two years of further schooling in civic school (Kansalaiskoulu), the curriculum of which was more practical in nature. The pupils who were not interested in academic studies undertook these eight years of schooling (Luodeslampi and Kuusisto 2017).

Those pupils who wanted to continue their education, and were able to do so after entrance exams, moved into a middle school. That school was more theoretical and provided qualifications for further academic studies. This shift usually took place in the fourth grade (Age 10). Middle school was equivalent to junior high school, and at that time it took five years. Originally, the middle schools were private. From the beginning of 1960s onwards, municipalities also started running middle schools (Luodeslampi and Kuusisto 2017).

After middle school, it was possible to apply for a further three years in upper secondary school (Lukio, which is an A-level equivalent). After those three years, it was possible to take the national matriculation examination. The new comprehensive school meant that everyone could get high quality education and proceed into further studies. From comprehensive school, everyone with results good enough could apply to go to Lukio (Luodeslampi and Kuusisto 2017).

Another remarkable change in 1971 was in the number of school days each week. In the previous system, students attended school six days each week, from Monday to Saturday, and the new system reduced this, establishing the present five-day school week. In addition, there was a change in holidays; it had been customary for the schools to leave the long summers for farm work and only restart after harvest season, whereas now the new comprehensive schools had shorter holidays. The number of lessons allocated to each subject also changed. The total loss for RE as a subject was 39 hours per school year. This matter was remarkable for the RE teachers’ job opportunities, as it reduced the teaching hours and hence the number of RE teachers needed became fewer (Luodeslampi and Kuusisto 2017).

The career trajectories of the teachers who participated this study endured from the early 1950s to the early 2000s. The underlying pedagogical understanding in Finnish RE from the 1950s to the 1960s was that Christianity is an inseparable part of the state education. From the 1970s to the 1980s, comprehensive school changed this idea towards a “love your neighbors” kind of approach in RE teaching. From the 1980s to the 1990s, the main idea was to find meaning for ethical and life questions in societal context, whereas from the 1990s to 2000s, value clarification had an important role. The developmental direction of RE as a subject headed towards global citizenship skills (Poulter 2011; Saine 2000; Pyysiäinen 2008; Pyysiäinen 1982; Peltonen 1979; Kallioniemi 2005; Kuusisto and Gearon 2016) The debate regarding the nature and position of RE is closely related to the societal hegemony and the position of religions within that frame (see, e.g., Poulter et al. 2016).

At almost the same time when the Finnish comprehensive school was being established, Grimmitt and Read (1975) published their definition of learning *about* and learning *from* religion. Learning *about* religion refers to what the pupils learn about the beliefs, teachings and practices of the religious traditions. It also includes what pupils learn about the nature and demands of ultimate questions, about the nature of a “faith” as a response to ultimate questions, about the normative views of the human condition and what it means to be human, as expressed in and through traditional belief systems or

stances for living of a naturalistic kind. Learning *from* religion refers to what pupils learn in RE about themselves. What they learn about discerning ultimate questions and signals of transcendence in their own experience and considering how they might respond to them. Impersonal evaluation involves being able to distinguish and make critical evaluations of truth claims, beliefs and practices of different religious traditions and of religion itself. It also includes personal evaluation, which is an attempt to confront and evaluate religious beliefs and values (Grimmitt 1987; Teece 2010).

The shift to comprehensive school in Finland was also a shift influencing of the way of teaching RE as regards the pupils' learning *about* and learning *from* religion. That is, the newly established comprehensive school represented more of the learning *from* religion approach than what the previous school system did. In addition, the learning *about* perspective was strengthened. Although religious education was still confessional by nature in Kansakoulu (elementary school), its perspective expanded from devotion to understanding religion. Religious education curriculum also included the contents on the science of religion (Kallioniemi 2005).

RE teaching model in Finland is still based on an idea of education in teaching groups which are based on the pupil's "own" religion, that is, determined by their religious (non-)affiliation. As RE these days is a non-confessional school subject in Finland, and a Secular Ethics alternative is offered alongside the various alternative RE instruction groups, how non-confessionality is defined and where the approach alters between the questions of learning *from* and *about* religion may at times seem unclear. Nevertheless, what is clear is that during the time when these RE teachers were in their active working life, RE as a school subject gradually shifted into an increasingly non-confessional subject and towards learning *from* approach (Kimanen 2016; Kallioniemi 2005; Hella and Wright 2009).

## 2. Previous Research on RE in the Finnish School System

According to Roos (1987), the age group of the participants in this life history study belongs to what he defines as the second generation. This generation, Roos defines through the post-war reconstruction which ascends to reconstruction generation. According to the typology described by Roos, this generation born between the mid-20th century and the late 1930s has often experienced distress and lack in youth, often encountered various difficulties and has lived in a period of consumer goods scarcity. Post-war prosperity and reconstruction has focused on the status of this generation in society. In this age group, the typical life cycle has been one where the family acquires their own home, car and educates their children. During their lifetime, there have been major social and economic changes. In Roos' study, this generation explains biography in terms of work, as Roos' material has been gathered during the active career of that generation. The biographies show how the nature of work also represents power (Roos 1987, pp. 54–55). The material reported in this article has been collected since the retirement of this generation, when the career of these teachers is already behind us. Thus, the authors' work reports are retrospectively reminiscent of the earlier stages of the life cycle.

Säntti (2007) has analyzed teachers' biographical data and discovered some patterns for teachers in general. Many teachers write about their work as a vocation, a notion which is often associated with religion. Teachers also emphasize the idea of development in their work, development-oriented writings often expressing the idea of sacrifice. The third group consisted of teachers who told about the renewal of work through life event. In Säntti's material, the fourth group were teachers who had experienced some form of discrimination. The reason for discrimination could, for example, relate to the subject being taught. The fifth writing group was made up of those who became teachers by chance (Säntti 2007, pp. 378–96).

The importance of education for Finns has also been clarified through life history research (Antikainen 2017). Until 1935, the unified school system had not yet existed at school and the opportunities offered to the individual in education varied greatly, in terms of both time and regional variations. The war was as if it were a combination of different stages of life and work typically played a very central role in one's life. Training represented the ideal for those people at that time. For those born from 1936 to 1955, education meant a career opportunity. The development of the

school also increased opportunities for more extensive education. Training was clearly instrumental. In people's lives, work and education were clearly linked. The post-1956 generation had wide-ranging opportunities for education, and education itself was guaranteed. Taking up hobbies and discovering one's own identity began to be more prominent (Antikainen 2017, p. 138). For the four teachers in our study, education represented a strengthening of livelihood and career creation. The education of their students, on the other hand, typically represented self-discovery. In practice, the teachers' own educational background was very different from that of the school world where they taught.

During their career, religious teaching was in a secure position as part of the societal educational system (Kallioniemi 2005; Poulter 2011, 2013; Pyysiäinen 2008). There are several ways in which religious education was recognized as being socially significant. Various meanings of confessionality have been given. According to Kähkönen (1976), confession was a weapon used against religious education. According to him, in the legal sense at that time, it was considered that confessional religious teaching was a way to ensure that both majority and minority religious could be freely observed. Lutheran religious teaching was organized and examined by the municipality and state authorities, and its regulation fell under the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education. The theological interpretation relied on the notion that religious education provided a capacity to develop one's own religion beliefs. Part of this capability concerns the content of the subject being studied. However, the perspective expanded to include the study of other religions. From a pedagogical point of view, confessionality is related to the home background, beginning with what is familiar from home education and tradition. In Finland, the primary focus on Lutheran education weakened when the curriculum was reformed (Kähkönen 1976; see also Luodeslampi 2009). According to Pyysiäinen (1982), in comprehensive schools, the concept of religion established that the task of religious education was no longer identified with the educational function of any church or religion. He problematized the division into legal, theological and pedagogical confession. Especially the boundary between theological and pedagogical confession was clear. On the other hand, previous interpretations have also shown a fourth alternative: social confession. Social confession has mainly been justified for social reasons. Pyysiäinen suggests that with respect to confession teaching religion can in principle be seen from the perspective of three aspects. Firstly, the purpose of this teaching could be to encourage a deeper belief in a specific religion. On the other hand, it could provide the basis for religious life, and the things that would be studied would be predefined. Thirdly, teaching could lead students to objectively examine different religious and other views (Pyysiäinen 1982, pp. 74–78).

The current debate on religious education in Finland has similar features to the reflection of the time when comprehensive school was debated. In the current debate, the question about forms of RE has been raised. Should all pupils be in the same classroom at RE lessons or should they be separated as they now are? Should it be a common subject for all religions? Now, everyone is getting RE according their own creed (Rissanen 2014; Rissanen et al. 2016; Poulter 2013; Åhs et al. 2015; Kuusisto and Gearon 2016; Matilainen 2016). For example, in the 1960s, it was debated whether teachers were mainly representatives of a particular religion or subject, although the scale of religious diversity in society was different from today (Aikonen 2015, pp. 169–77; Luodeslampi and Kuusisto 2017). At that time, it was topical to reflect on the relationship between the teacher's professionalism and his or her own view or ideology. Political activism (Luodeslampi 2009) and especially the role of the left as a challenger to religious education sharpened the debate (Luodeslampi and Kuusisto 2017).

An international study of the history of religious education reveals that, at the time of the birth of comprehensive school, the nature of the subject began to change in many European countries. For example, the education and background of Danish religious teachers began to change in a more academic direction (Buchardt 2017, pp. 55–58). In the United Kingdom, the confession of religious instruction was changed and the subject became more general (Freathy et al. 2014, p. 9). Research into enriching the history of religious education has recently been conducted in Britain (Doney et al. 2016; Freathy et al. 2014). In these studies, literary material can be seen as life history, and material also comes close to the oral history tradition. Oral history can be seen highlighting hidden voices. A life

history perspective seeks to locate the experiences of marginalized social groups and enrich the history with the voices of individuals, for example, through biographies, diaries, and interviews (Doney et al. 2016, pp. 4–5). In Finland, written materials have for a long time been used in oral history research. This differs slightly from the larger international oral history tradition (Fingerroos and Riina 2012; Heimo 2016).

### 3. Life History Research on Teachers' Professional Trajectories

Life history research is a sociological and anthropological research tradition that has since spread to other disciplines. For example, the early research period represented the life histories of Native American chiefs. The research method includes its own limitations regarding the basic nature of the reports. How much are life histories about individual lives or are they more about a common humanity that people share? Does life history describe one story or something more? In life history research, interest is focused on how people compose their narratives, not on how they should do it from someone else's perspective. A report is made at one interpretative level, but its transformation into life history research adds another level of interpretation.

In our study, the reports reflect the historical circumstances in which the events recorded took place but also the personal views of the four teachers themselves. The question is about social construction and not just about the changes in time and space (Goodson et al. 2017, pp. 23–31).

In this study, the analysis of life history material as a structuring theoretical framework (Goodson and Sikes 2001) is based on teachers' perception of confession in Pyysiäinen's (1982) structured approach (Pyysiäinen 1982, pp. 74–78). Various forms of life history research have been made in terms of teaching (Säntti 2007; Heikkinen and Leena 2002). Life history research seeks to discover the different historical stages of life. These studies have not been specifically linked to religious teaching but have been accompanied by a more general study of teacherhood. The life history research perspective of teachers in general is presumably also in line with religious teachers, but, on the other hand, the subject of religion may include the dimension of belief and this may appear in the narrative.

Both the career motives and professional orientation of theologians as well as the religious university pedagogy of multidisciplinary students have been studied (Niemelä 1999; Vermasvuori 1997). These studies have touched upon religious teachers, but the time perspective has been different. Ubani (2017) has studied how the academic community around religious education has influenced the subject through research, publications and development and teaching. According to Ubani, the emphasis of religion didactic in Kalevi Tamminen's period during the 1980s was empirically based on the psychological nature of religion. The careers of the teachers in our study were mainly during Tamminen's time. From the 1980s onwards, the personality psychological perspective represented by Hannele Niemi represented the next academic trend. Research, curricula, and development have, at any given time, formed their own complex interactions, where the outcome has clearly been linked to the time and the current discussions (Ubani 2017).

### 4. Method

This article examines the question: What kinds of accounts of religious education teaching do Finnish RE teachers born in the 1930s give about their autobiographical career trajectories? This research problem is approached through the following sub-questions: (a) How do these teachers describe religion as a subject of confession in their reports? (b) What are the elements of religious education subject contents that are central to teachers' career trajectories?

Research into life history accounts such as the material analyzed here can by nature be described as narrative (Heikkinen 2010, p. 143). On this basis, it can be said that this study represents narrative research. In general, the study which tells about the past is based on the interpretation of modern times, where the past is intended to provide a meaningful explanation and background. When people tell about their own lives in their narratives they search for meaning and a kind of cohesion in the

fragmentary pieces of life events. According to an old Finnish saying “time makes memories golden” but as far as this research goes the present time is as important as the past it is in memories (Hyry 1995).

The character of our four teachers’ scripts is narrative in nature, and they are examined by means of thematic analysis (Kyngäs and Vanhanen 1999; Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2004). In the narrative review, the emphasis in the theme is on the narrative review of content: in what is said, rather than to whom the message is directed or how it is said. Thematic analysis is suitable for methodically collected narrative sources and materials such as writings, interviews, and group discussions (Riessmann 2008, p. 54).

It is important to note in the memoirs that present-day discussion and later life history influence how things are told. Memoirs attempt to give an understandable interpretation of the past (Ollila 2010; Korkiakangas et al. 2016).

## 5. Data

The research material was gathered in 2011 by sending a letter to all religious education teachers who were born in the 1930s who could be found in the database. This database, published by the Clergy association in Finland, contains the information of all Finnish Lutheran theologians (Pappisliitto 1999). All of the teachers who participated in the research have been Lutheran Religious Teachers and theologians of basic education. A writing request was sent to 146 teachers, of whom 62 religious teachers returned their writings. Taking into account the workload required to compile and deliver the script, the response rate is quite significant (43%). Religious teaching as a career was defined as at least 10 years of work experience in teaching religion. The authors were born between 1930 and 1939 (age 72–81). Of these, 43 were women and 19 were men. Most of the responses were written in Finnish, with two in Swedish (which is also an official language in Finland). Some of the responses already referred to impaired health, such as: “Unfortunately, I have not actually been able to write this because I have brain injuries and I am aphasic. My husband has written up my responses.” One response was video recorded instead, because the respondent wanted to contribute to the research but could not write his life history account due to his weak health. This, together with the high response rate, illustrates the commitment of those who responded to the writing request, which in turn reflects their dedication to their work in education and perhaps also the need to have their professional life story heard and documented.

A form for gathering background information and a form with optional support questions were sent out to the teachers with the writing request. The support questions were based on Kallioniemi’s (1997) previous study of the professional image of religious teachers. Kallioniemi divides the religious role of a religious teacher into five parts: work assignments, professional roles, science base, professional values and the concept of religious education. He divides the teaching of religion into five content dimensions: (1) the emphasis on teaching expertise; (2) the emphasis on religious mission; (3) the emphasis on RE definition; (4) the emphasis on subject teacher profession; and (5) the emphasis on theology (Kallioniemi 1997, p. 226). The help questions and background information section of this research paper was constructed so that all the areas of professional roles presented by Kallioniemi were taken into consideration. In this study, the participating teachers have told freely about their career. This freedom allows one to choose the perspective from which one can talk about one’s working years.

The target population of the participants sets some particular ethical limits, as the above description of some of their fragile health also indicates. The material has been gathered and analyzed with utmost respect to the participants, treated with confidentiality and is stored securely. Furthermore, the four teachers cited here are naturally referred to through pseudonyms. The names or exact descriptions of any of their schools are not given in the study, because identity would easily be revealed in such a small and age defined RE teacher population.

It is also an ethical question how to deal with such remembrance material. Reminiscence is very personal and, above all, the expression of one’s own experience. The experiences are told much later than the events themselves, and time may have gold-plated some memories (Säntti 2007; Sikes 2000; Roos 1996; Valtonen 2004; Saarenheimo 1997). However, this study does not seek to compare experience

with other research on the history of religious education and as if it were to be seen in the spirit of the theory of cohesive theory. According to Bruner (1986), there are two kinds of knowledge: paradigmatic and narrative. Narrative information does not dissolve the particular into general categories in traditional truth theories, but information is expressed in narration (Bruner 1986, pp. 11–23). This study examines how an individual builds meaning on what has happened by telling the stages of working life that, when they happened, may have been quite atomistic and momentary experiences. Afterwards, meanings are built, and of course time can shed a golden light on the past. Identifying these features is important, but for the study itself, the present experience of the past. In the analysis of these 62 narratives it was possible to see five categories representing how teachers talked about their career. These categories are in the Table 1 which describes different ways of telling about RE teacher's career. Mostly narratives were told from an educator's position. Teachers felt that religion as a school subject is important but also that the lessons supported the growth of youngsters. A small number of the teachers were rather religion oriented. They saw their career as a mission from God. One part of the teachers was active in developing pedagogy and learning methods. One group was politically active and their narratives included this aspect. A rather large number gave basic information but without interpreting their careers. Usually these teachers told about the years when they taught, the schools they have been at, and statistical data about their career.

**Table 1.** Different ways of telling about a RE teacher's career (62 narratives).

Category	Supporting Youngsters Growth and Education	Pedagogical/Didactical Approach	Political Point of View/Association Membership	Religious Mission as a Teacher	No Interpretations
Amount	27	8	6	7	14

## 6. Results: Four Paths into the RE Profession

Each of these four teachers had a theological education, which is typical in the wider dataset, and have then taken up the profession of a religious teacher. Despite these common determinants, the life history accounts here reveal very different explanatory factors for this career. The names used in the article are naturally pseudonymous.

### 6.1. Aura

Aura is the mother of nine children and cared for children at home. Her active teacher career at school therefore lasted 16 years. She has been influenced by her life in Lapland and in Central Finland. Her religious reference framework is Laestadianism. Her work career can be divided up into before children and after taking care of her children. The former period lasted nine years and ended in 1967 and the latter began two decades later in 1987. Aura describes the spirituality of her own home as an important factor in her graduation as a religious teacher. She describes the atmosphere of her home as liberating: "We had a free atmosphere. Conscience expressed sin as sin, even though it would not be spoken of. Then it was possible to tell, to apologize, and the parents forgave all sins in the name of Jesus and in the covenant of peace—peace, freedom and joy."

The war affected the Aura family in a special way. Aura's mother died during the war, and when school time came, she was evacuated: "In the autumn, when the school should have started, the front approached my home village. The Germans arrived; the bridges were mined with big bombs. I had to be evacuated."

Aura went back to her family and to school after returning home. After graduation, she had two study options, between which Aura described the process as follows: "I was offered the mathematics or the theology my life's work. Theology prepares your life for the most important things we need to consider." faculty. I chose the former. Fortunately, within a week, it turned out that this was not Aura's first job was in rural Finland in Central Finland. She had already received another job but decided to take the offer in Central Finland and later saw it as God's will: "Now I see it as the hand of God."

Aura felt that her first school community was supportive. Aura felt that the Teachers' Room was important: "The Teachers' Room was full of great, experienced teachers. The reception was cordial. I blended in effortlessly, quickly." Aura depicts school life as a family: "My closest colleagues were all middle school and high school students, my lovely children [ . . . ]. The spirit was cozy and calm. The rector was like a relaxed, smiling, father in the middle of the family." However, Aura's career changed when she had children. In 1960, only one month's maternity leave was given. When Aura returned to work after the birth of her first children, an assistant was needed: "In the morning, my children ate and were then put outside. During the school lesson, an assistant brought my children inside and they were fed. Some of the pupils took part in dressing the babies so that they could get out of their prams to sleep." In the case of older children, the procedure was somewhat different: "In the morning I took the prams under the birch trees and when I went back after coffee, they could toddle around".

These childcare issues meant that Aura stayed at home for 20 years. The return to school life went well, as Aura was asked to be a teacher at a nearby school. Aura describes the situation as follows: "The school had had teachers that I knew. I complained to them that I haven't had weekend training sessions, which you have received in the meantime. They put my mind at rest: Don't worry, we haven't learned anything about them. Later I was in weekend trainings and learned nothing."

Aura's career is religiously active and her religious activity is reflected in her work as a teacher, for example, in running a Bible Circle. Bible Circles were not part of the school education. Some of the teachers did those according to their own belief. Some pupils were interested to come to the Bible Circles. The Bible circle was already in the school before Aura, but Aura continued it. Aura had written letters during 1960s in which she described the Circle to a friend. One interesting discussion in a letter revolved around the nature of Christ and Muhammad as prophets of their respective religions. Her writing shows rather much her personal religious interpretation on that time when multicultural situation was not present in the Finnish life. Bible circles have also dealt with youth issues that Aura describes in her letter as follows: "Some of the girls asked if she gave up when he once experienced something during her teenage days and then it was left behind. I replied that I did not know, but in any case, I should ask believers if forgiveness belongs to them John 20: 21–23." Aura contemplated the possibility of removing religious teaching from the curriculum and sees confession as a good starting point. If the Church is separated from the state, will the teaching of religion be completely excluded?" Aura describes herself as the sum of many things: "As a teacher, I have been supported by magnificent principals, a good spirit in the teaching room, a family, correspondence, and the Laestadian Association (*Rauhanyhdistys*)."

Aura has maintained contacts with former colleagues and occasionally arranges coffee or meals together. Some students have a life-long connection. As a remarkable memory, Aura has the statement of a former student: "The particular importance of religious teaching is that it is the most important, far-reaching, life-giving, peaceful world of peace, spiritual, spiritual, material, and natural influences that affect all solutions."

## 6.2. Per

Per started his career as a pastor in 1964 with responsibility for youth work. He describes how the church maintained a youth café in the basement. According to Per, the clientele consisted of young teenagers who were drug and alcohol users. He describes the home backgrounds as "somewhat terrible". With these young people Per felt his lack of experience: "We couldn't do anything for these young people and we didn't make any contact with social workers or health care, even though they should have been brought in." However, later in his career, the café gave him some insights. As Per says: "There is no need to worry even if a young man says 'I'll kill you'." One thing that Per learned in his ecclesiastical career was to cope with fear: "There seemed to be no difficult young people." At one point, Per considered doing missionary work, but this did not seem feasible with four children. In his



career as a pastor, Per continued to work for the church related organization and later as a director in church youth work.

As a youth work leader, the career became problematic and finally administration of the church decided to terminate the post. At this point, Per's friend who was rector and another friend who was financial manager decided to save him. The rector called and asked to become a religious teacher and so Peri's career as a teacher began. Per describes the new situation: "I'm above mentioned NN and NN deeply grateful, I like them as angels of my life. They saved the fool, and schoolwork opened up a new, inspiring and demanding world for me."

Per's was assisted in taking up his first job as a teacher by a network of acquaintances. Per reflected on the kinds of renewal required by school life: "Immediately at teacher training I did a lot of work, because at the same time I was already an instructor for the N joint school. Anyway, I had to study all the time as a teacher. In retrospect, I wondered, that the church would have been able to act as a pastor and gives a sermon after the other without reading any theological book. At school it was impossible to be without learning new things all the time."

Per also pondered the position of religious education in 1963 on the basis of an article in the yearbook of the Diocese of Tampere: "The title of Samuel Lehtonen's article was: The false trees of the Church. I do not remember all of them, but at least Lehtonen mentioned the right for the church to be given tax money and the confessional teaching of religion; they should be dismantled. I thought Lehtonen was right." Per's dilemma hence was: If he decided to teach religion, was he keeping up "one of the false support trees of the Church"?

Regarding the trajectory from pastorhood to teaching, the tension between an ecclesiastical and a school career has been preserved in Per's mind: "Sometimes I wonder if I go to school as a church worker ... On the other hand, I was so up to here with the church that when I got to school, I thought I would be far away; so I sent out a university application letter to study to be a history. I put an application letter in the mail but it disappeared. I called the faculty. No, they hadn't received my letter ... so I stayed in the dumps."

Per remembers his life as a teacher with mixed feelings. Per told us how he put second grade pupils together to describe the future: "The feedback was very pessimistic: nuclear war, pollution, destruction of the world. I remember a couple of answers, both boys. One said Jesus will come again and save us, and the other who had just been to the hairdresser and had an impressive 'hedgehog' haircut predicted that the 'hedgehogs' would rise to power."

Per's life as a teacher also included memories of distressed youngsters: "I was just about to start a test when one of the girls began to cry uncontrollably. I couldn't think of any other option than to take her out of the classroom. I left the others to do the test and took the girl into the corridor. She was very worried about the future of the world, so worried that she couldn't do the test. We talked a long time. I admitted that the future didn't look bright, but better than crying was trying to do something to improve things. She later became a female politician, a politically active member of the Green Party." Per explains how one student was worried about one of the politics: "... a communist? Me: I'm not a communist, socialist yes". Student: "Look out! You see, when the far left come to power, they'll kill all the socialists." Politics did not play a role at teaching in schools during Per's career. However, as a teacher Per found students in the 1980s were often politically active and went on their own initiative on marches.

Per told us about his teaching of sexual ethics: "When I started with sexual education I said: write down what questions you want to discuss during sex education classes. I'll try to deal with everything you ask, and if I don't know, I'll find out from the experts. Well, there were a lot of responses, and many said tell me about gays!" One of the lessons was attended by a school board inspector. He was given the same list of questions as the students had. One question was: "Which one should take the initiative with intercourse, the boy or the girl or either?" After an hour, the inspector asked how the lesson plan was formed. When he was told that the questions discussed were those raised by the students themselves, he asked "Do they really ask you such questions?" Collaboration between the school

and the church congregation was from Per's point of view, not always satisfactory: "The impression arose that the pastor came out of the cuckoo clock to see what belonged to the outside world". To Per, the school community was as much a congregation as anything else. He thought that when a pastor visited school the church did not visit the school. The church was already there in the form of pupils and teachers and the pastor was only meeting his congregation. Based on that thinking teachers began to systematically teach high school students: "Do not believe what the visiting pastors say—you are here in school, in the work of the church; you were baptized as members of the church, and no one can deny your membership."

One warm experience for Per was a joint Christmas mass for two schools. For the first time, a lot of pupils came to Communion and a tradition was born. Immediately on the first occasion, the Communion bread was real bread made by two ladies.

The changes that took place in school life as a result of various experiments developed Per's pedagogical skills. One 3–4-hour trial test was described by Per. "Examples: A test of a foreign religion course dealing with the basic doctrines of Zoroastrianism that had not been introduced into a class earlier. The task given was: Here are some basic ideas about a religion (Zoroastrianism). Explore them and compare these ideas with other religions you have learned about on the course." According to Per, boys especially liked these types of task.

In his role as counsellor, Per's experiences went beyond the school environment, such as taking part in youth coffee mornings or volunteer work with drug addicts.

At the end of his remembrance, Per realized that he was wrong in denigrating the pastorhood, for pastor and teacher were not contradictory roles. He concluded, "being a teacher has brought me great personal satisfaction".

### 6.3. Shirley

Shirley became a religious teacher as a result of her upbringing. In high school, she was involved in Christian teenage activities and had a Christian education at home and at school. As women could not enter the pastorhood, being a teacher of religion was an alternative option. Shirley graduated from high school and university in the 1950s. She did not marry or raise a family.

Shirley felt that, in post-war Finland, religion had a solid position as a school subject in the mid-1950s. Her work with schools began in the late 1950s, starting in a small town in North Karelia. She describes the school atmosphere: "School at that time was good and there was little need for the teacher to intervene in disciplinary action". The next step in her career took her to Central Finland. About the difference between an urban and a rural community, Shirley states: "The connection with the church and participation in the activities of the parish was not as firm and tradition-based as in the countryside, because the urban community had a lot of people who had moved to towns for reasons of work". Later, Shirley's career continued in southern Finland as a teacher trainer. Shirley describes the 1960s–1970s as a period of turbulent political turmoil: "The proliferation of leftist ideologies and their world values created a struggle and contradiction between different views. From the era of Finnish unified culture, the transition to multiculturalism and a more democratic society began, emphasizing individual rights and freedom of choice."

Negative attitudes towards the Church and religion were particularly strong. As Shirley said, "The tensions between the Church and the State, as well as the possibility that religious education in schools would be terminated were repeated in previous decades. The position of religion as a school subject has been a controversial topic for more than forty years." From the point of view of the changes in the school system, Shirley sees the 1970s as significant. She describes how in a democratic society all children and young people were expected to have equal opportunities for schooling. However, she draws attention to the role of political parties: "There were great differences between the parties about the status of religion and the content of the curriculum at different levels of schooling."

She continued: "The radical leftism that was in fashion among university students spread to teenagers in schools. In the 1970s, national education brought school democracy and equal opportunity

to study for all children and young people, regardless of wealth. The academic year was marked by the election of school councils, in which both teachers and students recruited candidates according to their party ranks. The pupils' participation in the work of school boards activated them in the planning of school work and familiarized them with social issues. However, political pressure interfered with the practical running of school affairs, causing disputes and power struggles within the school."

However, Shirley also considered that politicization had a positive effect: "The total number of pupils interested in political activities was rather small, even though active leaders were keen to spread political propaganda. There was also a positive development in the school atmosphere. Democratic thinking brought about a greater openness in the relationship between teacher and student. Pupils began to make teachers sit down and answer their thoughts freely in discussions. In the teaching of religion, the change of the old teacher-centred teaching style to emphasize student-centredness was positive especially given the nature of the subject. The student-centred treatment of the different elements of religion allowed us to take into account the level of development associated with their age both in terms of thinking and emotional life."

The transformation of the school system into primary school and upper secondary school also influenced the teaching of religion, which Shirley described as difficult to work in practice: "Changes in the curriculum and subject-specific hours made it difficult for religious teachers especially in small schools with few pupils. The number of hours given to religious education decreased at both the primary and secondary levels. In addition to religion, the increasing number of children from divorced families became a subject of often quite controversial discussion."

From Shirley's point of view, the most important aspect of school reform from the perspective of religious education was the more versatile curriculum. New teaching technologies and the increase in the range of teaching materials provided opportunities for illustration and motivation. At the lower secondary level, the teaching contents were still bible-centered and contained information about the Lutheran church, but new textbooks and varying teaching methods helped to apply this teaching to the pupil's own level and to everyday life. Shirley describes multiculturalism as an important feature of school reform: "The treatment of foreign religions was important in primary school, which was important for understanding the traditions, values and ways of thinking of pupils from foreign cultures. The gradual development of Finnish society for multiculturalism required training in attitudinal education in order to accept diversity and respect for others." The decrease in the number of hours given to religious education was a problem for Shirley because it reduced teachers' contact with students. With this development, the effectiveness of teaching also deteriorated.

Shirley describes the change in high schools in the 1980s as positive, especially the application of teaching materials to the needs of pupils. She points out: "It is important for young adults who are growing up to find the sources that make up the building materials for life ahead. Deepening knowledge and discussing with students about life issues are the tasks of schools in the current confusing societal atmosphere of values and competition." Shirley sees her teaching as being more than just subject-specific but as educational in other subjects as well. She describes psychology as follows: "In some respects, religion may be too difficult for students to express their own opinions, especially if they think the teacher disagrees with them. A psychology teacher however would find it easier to share areas of knowledge with other subjects." The spiritual dimension was seen in school as events organized by the church, but she also talked about the transformation of morning assembly at school: "Not all the speakers among the pupils and other teachers were religious in content. Enthusiasm was greater when different themes were raised, as well as music that might be other than religious. The school reform was welcome in the sense that the responsibility and burden of religious education was shared by many."

Significant new learning developments have been important in Shirley's career. She describes the arrival of the new school system as important in this respect: "The new school system also started with teacher training and familiarization with both general school life practices and the renewal of self-teaching. Municipalities and cities, together with the National Board of Education and other

authorities responsible for school administration, organized regular training days with themes ranging from year to year. In these training sessions, there was a tendency to meet teachers of different subjects and discuss common school practices and problems. Common study days and meetings with teachers in their own group of subjects were felt to be important both for the status of religious education and for the maintenance of the level of education." Shirley felt her work was a vocation: "The profession of a religious teacher is a vocation. Its credibility is based on the teacher's personal experience of internalizing subjects taught at both the academic and emotional levels. Pupils expect the teacher to be stand behind their words and actions and respect their freedom of thought and faith."

She also sees her own career as a lifelong learning experience: "In order to stay a teacher in the face of new challenges, we must constantly update the growing and changing field of knowledge in our own teaching and pedagogy." At the end of her career, Shirley worked as a teacher trainer, and based on her own experience she concludes with her concern about those who might wish to become religious education teachers in Finnish schools: "Given the current multicultural and socio-political and educational perspectives, the pressure to stop religious education in schools has caused worries about work for theology students. This concern is constantly there."

#### 6.4. Hans

Hans ended up as a religious education teacher contrary to his original plan which he had had in the early stages of his studies. His intention was to become a parish pastor. He began working for a couple of years as a pastor, half of his duties being religious education. There was thus an opportunity to both honor religion and become a qualified a teacher—a combination of church work and school work. Some problems occurred, however, and someone complained to the ombudsman that there were three overlapping activities because Hans was a pastor, teacher and teacher trainee. As a result of the complaint, it was found that no error had occurred.

When Hans was pleased to be able to apply for the post of religious teacher and rector at the same school. Hans describes his career as meaningful: "The work has been rewarding and interesting the whole time. So often there were different kinds of changes that I was not bored. Firstly, the school was divided into a municipal secondary school and a high school. Then came the elementary school and the secondary school for the municipal school. These actions and changes caused enormous bureaucracy."

Hans ended up as teacher of religion in the provinces, which he carried out for a couple of decades alongside of his work as a pastor. Hans describes the consequences: "The result was a couple of decades of running around the country, summer trainer coaching courses, holding in-service training days, annual weeks in Heinola teacher training course centre, and much more. In the middle of all this, my doctoral studies were also completed."

Gradually, Hans entered the national curriculum planning group (hereafter, OPS). One change was in high school church history, contrary to the view of [Olavi] Aula, the chief inspector of the religious education at that time: "His special aim was to destroy church history, especially chronological church history. The widespread consensus was that religion as taught in the old high schools was too one-sidedly a church story. It was quite appropriate to reduce its relative share. But Aula only pushed for the thematic development of the Church, so that it would only be a course on basic information about the church at high school. This was not fully accepted in the field and the theological faculty rejected it completely. The anti-Aula lobby assembled a group of trainers and teachers for the week in Heinola to prepare for OPS (National curricula for RE). When after four days he failed to persuade this group of people to prefer his high school 3rd year, he said on Friday—completely out of character—that changing the contents of this course would be over his dead body. In practice, the 3rd year OPS was born in Hotel Torní's office."

Hans was involved in numerous school teaching material projects. The issue of church history was one matter: "At that time, school books had to be approved by the school board. Olavi Aula sat there as a gatekeeper and he would not accept the publisher's textbook series unless it included course 3a. So for that, we put together a good team and we did the best we could. Of course it was accepted

at the National Board of Education, but not in the field. A loss-making textbook would probably not be published at other times. But again, we learned a lot while doing it.”

A key part of Hans’ career was his organizational activities in the Religious Teachers’ Association. Hans describes this activity as being different: “The perspective now was different from the role and work of the teacher. This concerned lobbying, the struggle for status for one’s subject and the number of hours it should be taught. In every change in the school system and the OPS, the battle must be fought over and over again. These matters were especially important at the primary school level, where the number of hours for religion presented by the committee was being eaten away. The Committee did not propose compulsory Swedish for everyone [ . . . ] But when the National Board of Education did not agree to accept the government’s ruling without accepting Swedish, it was added to the national curricula and the hours were found. This was also the case with religious education.”

There were several ways to influence the Ministry of Education to ensure that religious education was still part of the curriculum. Hans describes the situation as follows: “It was strange that religion was the only subject that did not have an inspector at Finnish National Board of Education We were caught up in this shortcoming and as a group of county teacher trainers we went to meet with other authorities Minister Virolainen, eventually called for a correction to missing inspector matter.”

In Hans’ memories, it emerged that personal networks were important during his study years. Hans describes the meeting of the Minister of Culture as follows: “It was easy to approach him, because we have studied and lived live in *Konvikti* (students dormitory) at the same time. The school was not officially part of his responsibilities, but he was able to discuss matters with [Kaarina] Suonio (the Minister of Education). He said: if you want a cultural struggle, that’s what I can take care.”

In addition to influencing curriculum matters in general, the teachers’ organization was also responsible for basic and in-service training for religious education teachers. In particular, the teachers wanted to stabilize the role of continuing education in this field, which Hans describes as follows: “training centres had the support of the Church and the Evangelical Academy of Germany provided a model. We went to Germany to know more. Reijo Heinonen [Professor of General Theology] was particularly energetic in this matter. After proceeding through many stages, the Institute for Religious Education in Finland (UPI) was then set up in Seurakuntaopisto (the Church College).”

Information Technology also made its way into schools during Hans’ career: “ . . . I started to think of the idea of educating religious teachers who were members of the RE teachers’ association (SUOL). In our time, we didn’t have the specialist equipment we have now. In the absence of anything better, and with the support of the Church Board, we developed a database of Finnish church buildings. For example, at the UPI, we organized courses for religious teachers about using standard basic programs as one aid for this database.” Hans tells how, before the Internet and email, information was sent to schools with the help of modems. Hans summarizes his career as follows: “I have memories of my career that are mostly outside of school. However, of course, my actual work was done at my school. In the 1970s, religion was not particularly popular among the general public and especially not in the media. All kinds of threats against it were in the air. I wasn’t sure that I could support myself until retirement. Partly this fact also encouraged the expansion of my eligibility and so I got a qualification in psychology,” adding that “Teaching was a pleasure to me all in all”. He sums up his development thus: “I tried to develop my teaching and working methods with a new sense of excitement. I have at least felt that I got on pretty well with my students.” To Hans, teaching was more a lifestyle than a career: “I have not really seen my life as a career. I have come across situations and have lived through them. That’s what my career has been. It has tasted of life.”

## 7. Discussion: Life Stories and Perspectives

The professional trajectories of Aura, Per, Shirley and Hans vary according to their gender, as Per and Hans first began their professional careers as pastors, a profession denied to women at that time. Per’s ecclesiastical career ran into a crisis through tensions in the work community. He felt that his school was leaving him out. In this respect, personal networks were of great importance. Hans also

became a pastor instructor, and he developed his career in that direction. Hans became active in organizational activities and Per represents a clearer perspective on the intersection between individual growth and social vision. For women, teacher studies and practice took place immediately after basic studies. They followed a career in school work during their basic studies. Naturally, the fact that the female pastorhood was not possible at that time was also an issue (Lehtiö 2004).

Aura's career mainly related to two schools. Per, on the other hand, worked in the same school at different grades throughout his career. Shirley worked in several schools during her career. She spent a long time in three schools and also taught at a teacher training institute. Hans' career was largely in two schools, the school where his career began and then a longer career in the second. The two female teachers developed their careers in different ways. Shirley was strongly behind the pedagogical revival movement, while Aura was largely influenced by a fundamentalist Christian education. Their careers were different, partly on the grounds of religious beliefs. Shirley focused on developing pedagogy and subject matter at school level. Aura was more clearly concerned with religious work. Earlier research has shown that declarative religious teachers including Aura were relatively few during that working period. That is why it is important to look at this aspect further (Luodeslampi and Kuusisto 2017; Kallioniemi 1997). Aura's career includes a lot of material that refers to faith and religion, including the notion that students might be seekers of faith. Per has also struggled with a religious question, namely whether to pursue a career as a pastor or a teacher. His views on students clearly emerge from his work with students, the social context affecting what was discussed with students. In his narrative, helping students to deal with big issues was crucial. Shirley and Hans were most concerned about the professional side of being a religious teacher. Shirley focused on pedagogical development and Hans on organizational work. Their religious reference framework was mainly based on their own personal starting point and on an understanding of the nature of their subject. During their career, a Lutheran religious teacher had to be a member of the Church or otherwise he or she would not have been allowed to conduct religious teaching.

Aura clearly matches Pyysiäinen's first categorization that one way to look at religious education is to see it as a preparation for living in a religious community. Per, on the other hand, clearly strove to discuss religious issues and was versatile in his educational interaction with students. His starting point begins with the worldview of his pupils and aims at the far-sighted objectivity of Pyysiäinen's third model. The starting point for Shirley and Hans seems to be to motivate pupils to develop their own thinking.

The impact of politics on school life is clearly reflected in the reports by Per, Hans and Shirley. Per in particular discussed political topics with his pupils. Hans' and Shirley's perspective is to see politic issues as an aspect of school development. Aura did not put much emphasis on politics.

The relationship between continuing education and further training is positive for Peri, Shirley and Hans. Of them, Shirley mentions that she followed a lifelong learning philosophy. Hans acquired a variety of qualifications and doctoral degrees. Per described how a teacher's work requires continuous learning. Aura, however, did not feel she had received sufficient in-service training in her work.

Säntti's (2007) division in four teacher patterns in his biographical data could also be found in these four narratives. With our four teachers, the threat of the scientific revolution to ideas of faith seemed to apply to at least some of their comments. The development orientation is clear in three of them. Changes that arise from life events is raised in Per's report. The notion of a calling comes up in Shirley's and Aura's narratives, but they are different in content. In some respects, both Per and Hans have become teachers by chance. Discrimination is not directly mentioned in any of the reports, but Aura, Hans and Shirley do discuss the kind of pressures placed upon the teaching of religious education.

## 8. Analysis

Aura, Shirley, Per and Hans have written in their narratives about the relationship of confessional RE and faith in some meaning. As far as reading of narratives is briefly made, it seems to be so that

Aura is clearly representing the understanding RE as a question of deepening one's belief. However, is it really so? All of these teachers are sharing thoughts that RE is a good basis to build and develop one's own religious life. The difference seems to be in the understanding of which kind of religious life. In the Table 2 is illustrated how all of the teachers shared one aspect of confessional RE. They were supporting idea of provide basis for religious life. Aura was only who understood RE as encouraging deeper faith. Aura is devoted to a certain rather exclusive revivalist movement and, in her eyes, this means the same as shearing values and beliefs of that group. All others are much more supportive of the idea that everyone can find their own way.

**Table 2.** Confessionalism according Pyysiäinen's definition in these four narratives.

Dimensions of Confessional RE	Aura	Per	Shirley	Hans
Encourage a deeper belief	X			
Provide the basis for religious life	x	x	x	x
Could lead students to objectively examine different religious and other views		X	x	x

Especially Per is telling about situations of religious feasts. He is also telling how pastors visited schools. He also highly evaluates common worship in the Christmas time. His understanding seems to be divided into two sections. RE lessons are the place of freedom for discussions and wondering. Lessons are for the critical thinking and searching objective truths. All of this religious activity which he describes have happened outside of RE lessons. This religious activity and its values are fitting well to his background as a Lutheran priest.

What is the actual difference in these two narratives? In some ways, they are opposite but are they really? Both are religious persons and it could be seen in school life. Per's religious activity is not happening during lessons so clearly as Aura's. It could be said that Per is very much concerned about following curricula at lessons. He recognizes problem of being priest and tries to be aware of mixing it with his teacher role.

In Aura's world, the role of teacher is different. She is representing thought that has been more common during the previous school system. Comprehensive school was different, but Aura saw herself as a teacher but also some meaning presentation of faith. She appreciates highly situations where children are expressing their faith or moments when they are finding their Christian faith in the same meaning as Aura understands it.

Social construction of these two ways to be religious at schools could also be understood from background perspectives. Aura is a member of the revival religious movement and in her social frame of reference is much oriented to the right way to believe. Every pupil who is expressing interest of this way is sort of a victory in saving people. Per has gone through difficult times in the church and been working with youth in trouble. His religious activity is openly seen in the school in morning assemblies and worships. There is the major difference. His way of practicing religion at school is on an institutional level. Everyone could see it. He is open in this for the whole community but, during lessons, he takes more the position of listener in pupils' personal issues.

Shirley and Hans are teachers who are supporting pupil's own way to construct worldview and religious thinking, but their difference is in approach. Hans is active in politics and in the RE teachers' association. In his narrative, religion is also question about Finnish society and its values. His narrative includes much about different political situations when the RE is demanded. This narrative does not include so much about actual happenings in classroom. He mentions that work was interesting. He also describes that his roles as a RE lobbyist and teacher were different. His political action was for the RE and he does not talk so much about religious activity even though he started his career as a priest. Asking why he was active in defending RE is a demanding question. The answer could be constructed from small stories which were included in the narrative. It was at the end struggle for the religion's role in the school and in the society. It was also a political question because at the time of

developing comprehensive school the role of religion was questioned in whole society as well as in schools (Luodeslampi 2009; Luodeslampi and Kuusisto 2017).

Hans and Per were both priests. In Per's narrative, this thing could be seen at the school level. In Hans' narrative, it is more on the national level. Both are aware in their narratives that lessons could not be a place for faith activity; they were the place for critical thinking. Hans is active also as a priest but outside of the school and that might be the reason he makes clear division and writes more about RE as a school subject.

Shirley represents her narrative rather much as a pedagogical journey. The subject is the RE but a rather similar journey could also be found in other school subjects. RE has followed overall trends in society and school life. Her understanding of confessionals is rather content with how it is pedagogically approached. She describes her RE teaching career as a vocation and at the same time mentions freedom of thoughts. In her narrative, it is difficult to see any demand to confirm any religious belief. Her approach is an open platform to wonder about religion-related issues. However, has it always been so? Her career as teacher educator has been connected to the latest discussions and trends in pedagogy. Even though she does not mention it, the beginning of the career might be different. She mentions in her narrative lifelong learning and that really might be a case also in her teaching career.

When these four narratives are put together, there could be seen some common ground in the understanding of confessionals. RE is giving some basis for own personal development in religious issues. What could be behind that? In the curricula of comprehensive schools, this was the case demanded from RE (Luodeslampi 2009). Perhaps this is also one of the issues which are socially constructing the own understanding of being RE teacher. Some other perspectives might be broader interpretations of that. Aura is in the middle of the new and old school system in this sense. Other teachers have followed interpretation of confessionals in the way which curricula in comprehensive school address it. This means critical thinking and understanding of other religions and worldviews.

In the methodological literature, the role of researcher is crucial. Researchers already have their narratives, which affect the interpretations and analyses. The question is about two narratives: narrative of researcher and narrative of who is researched. When someone is asked to tell about career trajectory, he or she is immediately affected by from whom the question is coming (Caine et al. 2013; Clandinin 2016; Clandinin and Connelly 2004; Riessman 1993). In this research, the question is coming from the people who are from RE research society or network. If the same request had been made from another perspective, for example from people who are known to be against RE, the narratives might have been different, i.e., told for that audience. In this case, researchers are part of the RE society, and the narratives are told almost in the same frame of reference. This might help to express issues which might be in some other cases very difficult or at least would need to be defended. Thus, basically, these narratives are told rather much like the are told to other RE teachers. That might be a limitation, but it is also opening this point of view.

## 9. Conclusions: What Did RE Teaching Represent to These Teachers?

A few answers are provided to the research question: What did religious education represent for these teachers? With respect to emotionality, Aura was the most representative model of faith in the community. Per represented a perspective in which the pupil's own growth was supported by various abilities that were not in themselves limited to religious matters. Shirley and Hans both considered the notion of confessionals, seeing school as giving pupils the opportunity to build their own worldview through the subject matter of religion.

In relation to her own personal religiosity, Aura represents the notion of religion as a source of revival. Per, as a religious teacher, discussed his own history of church work, raising the question whether he was more of a pastor than a teacher. He saw school as a community and his pupils as being similar to church members. Shirley and Hans clearly represent a pedagogical school perspective.



For them, theological or ecclesiastical reflection is not central to the narrative of the work career. Hans entered into political matters and Shirley was strongly pedagogical in her reflections.

The relationship between teaching and social issues appears to be different for these four teachers. Per most clearly perceives political debate in lessons as fruitful, although at first he hesitated on whether the connection between politics and religious education was good. Likewise, Hans introduced social issues into his religious education classes, while Shirley looked at the social position of religious education in a pedagogical light. For Aura, politics posed something of a threat to religious education. For all, changes in the school system brought both challenges and opportunities in a pedagogical sense. Although Per did not see these changes as a major threat, all four teachers seemed to feel that religious education in schools needed to be justified. Their subject was being challenged and this pressure must be resisted. How the teachers responded to this threat was an individual matter.

The historical dimensions of religious education are often examined through official archival sources and research based on them. This phenomenon has also received international attention. In recent years, studies have been carried out with the aim of raising teachers' tacit knowledge and their individual experience of living (Doney et al. 2016; Freathy et al. 2014; Freathy and Parker 2015; Goodson 2001). These four professional RE teaching trajectories reveal the teachers' personal voices and thus complement the notion of a historical phase of religious education that saw the birth and stabilization of comprehensive school and changes in high school education during their careers. These personal approaches to careers show how teachers are linked to the personality and context in which their activities takes place. They are all combined with the notion that religion as a school subject is something special, something which as teachers has given their life history significant professional content.

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